



All Students Succeeding

A MASTER EDUCATION PLAN FOR A SYSTEM OF GREAT SCHOOLS

Executive Summary

ALL STUDENTS SUCCEEDING: MASTER EDUCATION PLAN SUMMARY

To “provide high-quality teaching and learning in every classroom in every school” over the long term, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) must find sustainable solutions to critical challenges inside and outside our school system.

First and foremost, DCPS must regain its place as the school system of choice for children and families in the District of Columbia. We must extend and strengthen our services to all of our student populations, bring young children into the system earlier, serve our special education students within their own neighborhood schools, give all students a strong foundation for learning in the fundamental skills of reading and mathematics, close achievement gaps, expand opportunities for students to excel, and develop effective strategies to keep all of our students in school through high school graduation.

To do this, we also must change the way we work as a system — building on what we do well and embracing new approaches that research tells us will help achieve improved results. Our critical challenges in this area include replicating our innovative and successful programs throughout the system; defining clear roles and accountability for student success; reaching out to our city through a culture of partnerships and collaboration; making DCPS the workplace of choice for teachers, principals and other staff; and making better use of our school facilities.

The Master Education Plan (MEP) offers a comprehensive, systemic response to these challenges and defines a clear set of strategies to reach our goals. As we implement the recommendations over the coming months, each of you should expect to see many changes, some dramatic, others more subtle. The Plan was submitted to the Board of Education on Feb. 27, 2006, for consideration and subsequent adoption.

BOARD OF EDUCATION CORE BELIEFS

1. We believe that all children can learn at high levels and that the achievement gap can be eliminated.
2. We believe that individual schools have a profound impact on children's lives.
3. We believe that DCPS can be a high-performing organization.
4. We believe that community collaboration is fundamental to achieving and sustaining excellence.
5. We believe that all students should be educated in a safe, healthy and educationally appropriate environment.

If You Are a Student ...

You should expect to be challenged in your classes. Our **new standards** in English and mathematics are considered among the best in the country. We will have similarly strong standards in science and social studies next year ... and in art, music, health/physical education and world languages by fall 2007. These new standards will send a strong signal to you, to your teachers, to your parents, and to colleges and/or future employers that you are capable of learning at very high levels.

To ensure that the new standards are reflected in the new curriculum, we are totally redoing the **high school course catalog** and weeding out all nonrigorous courses. Also, to bring us closer to what colleges and employers expect of our graduates, we are requiring an extra year of mathematics and science, a senior project, and 100 hours of community service to earn a regular diploma ... **26 graduation credits** in all, up from 23.5. By fall 2008, middle school students will be expected to take **Algebra I**.

As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, you will be taking more **year-end examinations**, starting this year in reading and mathematics for everyone in grades 3–8 and next year in science. High school students will be tested at the end of each course. These exams will give you an opportunity to show what you have learned throughout the year. However, we will not wait until the end of the year to see how well you are doing. In addition to checking your year-end progress, we will be giving **interim assessments** at the end of each advisory; that way, you and your teacher can work together

on topics in which you are behind, and you can move ahead in areas that you have mastered. Our goal is for teachers to treat each student as an individual and to teach accordingly.

Throughout the year, you will be getting much more adult assistance to help you do well in your courses. Each of you will have a **Student Support Team**, which will recommend specific steps teachers can take to help you catch up or, for students who are ready to move on, to accelerate your learning. At the high school level, these Support Teams will help you develop an **Individualized Graduation Plan**, which will plot your pathway to graduation.

For students who are ready for more challenges, we will begin offering new enrichment programs in elementary school, while expanding the world-class **International Baccalaureate** to four elementary schools, three middle and junior high schools, and one additional high school. Starting next fall, all high schools also will be expected to offer at least four **Advanced Placement** courses, in which students can earn early college credits. Another option for the college bound: expanded **dual enrollment** programs with local universities.

For students who need more help, you will get it. We are working with parents and teachers to explore the feasibility of a **longer school year**, which would allow us to expand summer school and offer additional instruction between advisories for students who are at risk of falling too far behind. Working with a range of community partners, we will be

KEY ACADEMIC GOALS

Percentage of students scoring proficient or above on DCPS assessments

	SY2004–05 Actual	SY2013–14 Goal
Elementary — ELA	50	100
Elementary — Mathematics	58	100
Secondary — ELA	30	100
Secondary — Mathematics	33	100

expanding our **after-school, weekend, summer and other out-of-school-time programs**; more than ever, we will ensure that these extended learning opportunities are closely connected to and reinforce the work you are doing in class. If you need more practice on multiplication, algebra, reading comprehension or any other subject, you will get it.

For students transitioning into high school, we will be expanding our successful **SummerBridge** program to additional schools this year ... and then to rising middle school students in SY2007–08. We also are working with several community organizations to develop stronger **out-of-**

If You Are a Parent ...

school-time programs for all middle schoolers. For students at risk of dropping out, a new partnership with the national Jobs for America's Graduates program annually will provide **dropout prevention and re-entry options** for 1,600 students, from middle schoolers to young adults.

Although we expect all students, except the most severely disabled, to meet the same standards, you will have a choice of **multiple pathways** to get there. Some students will take advantage of our much stronger and expanded **career and technical education** program, in which each high school will have a thematic focus in areas from TV/Video Production and Construction/Design to Culinary Arts and Health/Medical Sciences. Other students will take a more traditional liberal arts approach, while still others will take advantage of the International Baccalaureate program. Moreover, we will have built-in flexibility for students who are ready to graduate in three years and for those who need more time to take up to five years.

The boundaries for schools will be aligned so that, once you attend a school, the **feeder patterns** will enable you to matriculate with your friends and peers. If you are interested in attending a citywide school or a different cluster of schools, the process for moving will be simple, and you will not need to re-apply to stay once you are there.

You will have increased confidence that your child is being challenged and supported academically and that he or she has a wide range of program choices to meet his or her individual needs and interests.

Plus, to ensure that all children, no matter which school they attend, are exposed to a challenging curriculum, all elementary and middle schools will be required to teach at least 120 minutes of **reading/English language arts**, 70 minutes of **mathematics** and 45 minutes of **science** every day ... 45 minutes of **social studies** at least three times a week ... and 45 minutes of **art, music and physical education** at least once a week. We cannot expect all students to meet the standards unless they first have been taught the fundamentals as defined by our academic standards.

Through intensive and focused professional development, **your child's teachers and principals** are being helped to teach the standards, which includes learning how to customize their instruction to meet each student's particular learning needs.

You also will be dealing with a school system that is **organized more coherently**. Beginning in SY2007-08, we will start converting junior high schools into middle schools and become predominantly a system organized into elementary schools (pre-K-grade 5), middle schools (grades 6-8) and

high schools (grades 9-12). We are developing a phased-in transition to limit any short-term disruption to families.

We also will be creating **clusters of schools** so that a group of elementary schools will feed into a single middle school, which will feed into a comprehensive high school. You still will have the option to apply for an out-of-boundary transfer, but once your child is in a cluster, he or she can continue there through high school. This system will be easier for you to navigate and will minimize the transitional changes for your child. In addition, we will closely examine our out-of-boundary and federally mandated transfer processes and, based on parent feedback, make them easier to use.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Share school space with health and other social services for students: 87% support

Share school space with public charter schools: 51% support

High-performing schools should be given more flexibility: 89% support

All students should have access to the same programs, even if several small schools must be consolidated: 74% support

DCPS, like other school systems across the country, has struggled to develop a middle school program that is academically challenging, developmentally appropriate and sufficiently engaging. With help from local parents, teachers and national experts, we will create a **model middle school program** that will be launched in fall 2007. At the same time, we will create **pre-K–grade 8 schools**, or perhaps a cluster of schools, that are organized around a major instructional theme, such as International Baccalaureate, dual-language immersion, the arts, or science and technology.

If you are a parent of a 3 or 4 year old, we will partner with city agencies and others to enroll up to 200 additional **preschoolers** and 200 additional **prekindergarten** students a year for the next several years. Recent scientific research makes a compelling case for a strong early start.

If you are a parent of a **special education** student, we are strengthening our programs so that we can attract students who are currently in nonpublic placements or special centers into neighborhood schools. New systems will help ensure more timely assessments and referrals, fewer unnecessary referrals, Individual Education Plans that reflect our new learning standards, and fewer complaints and requests for due process. As we are released from legal consent decrees,

we will focus more on providing the kind of “differentiated instruction” that will reduce the number of students for whom special education is now the only option.

If you are a parent of a child who is still **learning to speak English**, we will be conducting more regular assessments and using them to better customize academic interventions. We will work especially closely with the 38 schools whose English language learner (ELL) students are not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading and mathematics. And up to 100 ELL parents a semester will benefit from a program through which you can learn about parent-teacher conferences, applying to college and other information that can benefit your child.

All parents will benefit from the five new **Parent Resource Centers** that we will open by SY2006–07 and from the focused training and materials that will help you understand our new academic standards, curriculum and exams. You will have ready access to information about DCPS through “School Close-Ups” on the DCPS Web site.

Finally, through revisions to the formula used to allocate funds and a careful process for closing or consolidating schools that are too small or underused to offer an adequate

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

All schools should use a common curriculum: 79% support

Offer art, music and physical education at least weekly to every student: 100% support

Raise graduation requirements: 82% support

Make rigorous academic curriculum a priority for middle grades: 88% support

Middle grades should focus on unique needs of adolescents: 95% support

Close and consolidate schools with very low enrollment: 89% support

instructional program, you can be assured that your child's school will receive its **fair share of funding**. We have too many pressing educational challenges to continue subsidizing schools that cannot stand on their own.

If You Are a Teacher or Principal ...

Your students should be more challenged and engaged ... your parents more involved ... and your funding more equitable, thanks to the kinds of changes described above.

Plus, your professional development is becoming much more focused on the **instructional strategies** that will help you teach to the new standards and better serve students with special needs in your classrooms. For those who want a more intensive experience, we are encouraging many more teachers to go through the process of becoming certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Use multiple supports to ease transition to middle school: 98% support

Offer more internships and real-world connections: 100% support

Better link after-school programs to learning standards: 96% support

Use SummerBridge programs to prepare rising 9th graders for high school: 95% support

We are continuing to develop a wide range of **curriculum tools** to help you translate the standards into daily classroom practice: scope and sequence pacing charts in each subject; sample lesson plans, learning activities and test items; and standards roadmaps that can help you help your students understand the big ideas and essential questions within each standard.

For the first time ever, our end-of-year and end-of-course **tests will be directly aligned** with our learning standards, which will provide a more accurate gauge of what your students have learned. Moreover, quarterly interim assessments in reading and mathematics will help you **adjust your instruction** in areas where your students are lagging or where they are ready to move ahead; a key part of our professional development will help you learn how to make the best use of these quarterly test results.

By SY2006–07, we will begin piloting **value-added assessments**, which provide a fairer and more precise way to measure the annual progress of each student; these will supplement the year-to-year testing snapshots that DCPS and most school districts traditionally have used.

A top priority is to ensure that you receive the **support you need from central office** — both in academic and nonacademic areas, such as procurement, human resources and information technology. To that end, starting with the senior management team in SY2006–07, all central office administrators will have **performance contracts**.

If you are in a school that is high performing and/or making steady improvement, you can negotiate additional **flexibility and autonomy** in areas such as budget and staffing. We expect 10 percent of our schools to earn this recognition in the next two years.

If you are in a low-performing school, we are providing a **broader range of assistance** — including comprehensive school restructuring models such as America's Choice, additional Solutions Teams of veteran principals and teachers, and more Literacy and Mathematics Coaches. Together, they can help you develop and implement effective instructional and management strategies.

If You Are a Community Member or Partner ...

We need your help.

Our new **Office of Community Partnerships** is working closely with city agencies, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, parent groups and many others to identify and carry out focused opportunities for collaboration. Our priorities are linkages that help reinforce classroom learning, but we also want to provide a wide range of extracurricular enrichment activities. Priorities include:

- Establishing up to nine new **full-service "community schools."** These are open seven days a week, well into the evening, and offer a wide range integrated services, supports and opportunities for children and families: after-school programs, adult education, health and social services, recreation, job counseling, and more.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Make summer school mandatory for students not meeting the standards: 89% support

Set clear partnership goals to support academic achievement: 98% support

Involve parents and community more in decision-making: 98% support

Focus after-school programs more on physical, social and civic development: 89% support

Share school space with before- and after-school programs: 95% support

- Providing **extended learning opportunities** for students who need or want them: after school, on weekends, during the summer and between advisory periods.
- Further developing a **co-location policy** to guide how we share school facilities with appropriate organizations, such as public charter schools, libraries, recreation and health care providers.
- Creating a **research partnership** with one or more local research organizations or universities, which will allow us to regularly and systematically measure "what works" and discard or adjust what does not.
- Expanding our **early childhood** programs for the city's youngest children.
- Strengthening our **career and technical education program** for older students.
- Taking advantage of our status as a global city to provide students with a broader range of **international learning opportunities**.

Through policies advanced by the MEP, you will have increased assurance that your tax dollars are being well spent. Starting in SY2006-07, all senior staff in central office will be held **accountable** through performance contracts for providing the supports that local schools need for teachers and principals to stay focused on instruction.

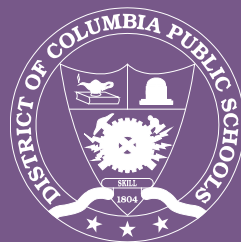
And you will be able to measure our progress in carrying out our goals through an **annual performance report** that will be published and distributed widely every August.



We know there is no magic fix for improving schools. Progress requires a clear, comprehensive strategy. The MEP aligns many strands of school reform efforts, interweaving these strands in an extensive effort to transform our school system so that it is focused on improving student achievement.

Each strand plays a vital role in the MEP strategy, and all are supported by a clear accountability and funding strategy. In the full plan, every key strategy area is described with clear, year-by-year actions. Through all of the strategies, we recognize that performance counts ... and we expect to be measured by our results.

For more information about the MEP, go to www.greatschools.k12.dc.us or call 202.442.5635.



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